

The main character(s) featured here are:

Vincent: The present-day Gym Leader of Nimbasa City. In addition to running a Dark-type Gym, Vincent is also a talented stage actor.

Zach: Vincent's Zoroark. Zach typically walks around with Vincent outside of his Ball, where he's Illusion-disguised as his Trainer.

Alfred: The director of the play that Vincent will be starring in.

As this particular story is in third-person, text placed between slashes, /like this/, will be used to indicate self-thoughts rather than spoken words.

****BING BONG, BING BONG****

"Attention, passengers. We will soon be arriving in the Galar Region. Please remain seated until the plane has come to a complete stop, and thank you again for choosing Corviknight Airlines!"

A colorful jetliner depicting a pair of Corviknight on either side sped through the air as the high-altitude clouds seemed to part and reveal the majestic Region of Galar on the other side.

On this particular flight was Nimbasa City's latest Gym Leader, a young man named Vincent Hawthorne who, in addition to running a Gym for Dark-type Pokémon, was also a theatre actor. Sitting next to him on his first-class flight (at the window, per their request) was what at first looked like an identical copy of the young Unovan man, but was actually their Zoroark in an **Illusion**-disguise, since it made them feel more comfortable when they were out in public with their Trainer.

"**Just think about it, Zach,**" Vincent said to his Pokémon companion, tilting his head slightly to the left as he glanced over at them and rested the back of his head in his palms.
"**Soon, we'll be in the land of Dynamax again!**"

"Not to mention wondrous sights, Master-- I've forgotten how *breathtaking* Turffield looks from this high up." The **Illusion**-disguised Zoroark continued to peer out of the nearby window as they gave their reply, their gaze presently affixed to the rolling hills of green and monoliths that lay down below. "So, if you don't mind me asking, Master, remind me once again why we're flying all the way to Galar?"

Vincent leaned forward slightly after Zach asked his question. "I'm gonna be starrin' in a stage production of one o' the original movies in the 'Operation Nightcrest' series!

Y'know, those movies with that *real famous* actor in 'em-- Rowan Maitland? Well, anyway, I was asked to star in the stage show as one o' the *head bad guys*. I'll be playin' the part of Jules Frye, a mad scientist. I've been readin' my lines over n' over again, so I wouldn't forget 'em." Vincent shook slightly with anticipation. "Ooh... I'm kinda excited, actually! Mr. Solaire, that's the play's director, by the way, even requested that I have a limousine ride to some *ritzy* hotel that we'll be stayin' at while we're in Galar, n' everything! Why, I can hardly--"

Zach placed a hand on Vincent's upper arm and gripped it. "Just remain calm, Master-- we still haven't touched down yet."

Vincent's cheeks reddened once more as he shrank slightly in his seat. "*R-right, Zach...*"

The Galar Region drew closer and closer as the airplane gradually lowered its altitude, and in time, Vincent and Zach could hear the skidding of the plane's landing gear against the Wyndon Airport runway. When the plane had completely come to a stop and the disembarking process had begun, both Vincent and Zach waited until nearly everyone else had gotten off of the plane first before they stepped off, themselves. Once the pair were in the airport terminal and Vincent had collected his luggage from the baggage claim, he practically *stretched skyward*. "*Aaaaaahhhhhh! Oh man, was I gettin' stiff. Alright, Zach-- let's at least get ourselves somethin' to chow down on while we're here.*"

Having endured a *lengthy* flight, Vincent and Zach quickly sat down at an airport café, where they enjoyed some piping-hot cocoa and fresh muffins. With how the sun had almost completely set beyond the horizon, Vincent and his Zoroark were able to take in the almost-nighttime atmosphere as they enjoyed their quick bite to eat and the drink that came with it.

After a quick trip to the restroom to rinse his face off, Vincent stepped through the airport's automatic-sliding double doors as fresh (or rather, *somewhat* fresh) Wyndon air filled his lungs. As he and Zach exited the building, Vincent spied a limousine chauffeur that was holding up a sign with the name "Vincent Hawthorne" written on it. "Hey, that'd be our ride!" The chauffeur was *incredibly* confused when they saw not one, but *two* Vincents, but after a quick explanation from the "real" Vincent, the Unovan Gym Leader and his disguised Zoroark pal were on their way. As the limousine drove through Wyndon, Vincent grinned as all manner of shops passed them by. "Ah, Wyndon... it's every bit the Galar Region's vibrant, beatin' heart as much as Nimbasa's Unova's own 'heart', y'know, Zach? 'Course, Spikemuth's got plenty o' neon, too..."

The Zoroark couldn't help but agree. "I would very much say so, Master. Perhaps, while we're here... *would you mind terribly if we went on that ferris wheel before we return to Unova...?*"

Several minutes later, the limousine pulled up to a *luxurious* Galarian Hotel, which even featured a pair of gilded statues of Zacian and Zamazenta roaring on its outer facade as well as an opulent fountain depicting a litany of Water-type Pokémon in its main lobby.

Vincent strode up to the hotel's reception desk. "Hey, there! I'm here to check into my room-- the name it's under oughta be 'Vincent Hawthorne'. Oh, and... sorry if we arrived late-- *the flight got kinda delayed a little, heh.*"

The receptionist simply looked at Vincent with slightly-narrowed eyes as he leaned his elbow on the counter, but it was after they quickly conducted a Pokénet search that their eyes practically became as large as dinner plates. "*Oh my Arceus, it is him...!*" They whispered under their breath.

Vincent heard them, and gave them a soft chuckle and a grin. "Eh, no need to make such a fuss! I appreciate it when I get to meet a fan, even overseas, but I don't wanna blow this up any bigger than it needs to be, y'know? You can just hand me my room key."

Having calmed themselves down somewhat, the receptionist handed Vincent a beautifully-designed key card for his hotel room. "Thanks a bunch! Don't worry, I'll bring my own stuff up." Afterwards, Vincent and Zach seated themselves on a sofa near the fountain as they took a brief moment to further process the fact that they were in Galar for

the next few days.

As Vincent reclined and took in the white noise of the hotel lobby's water fountain, he overheard a conversation between two of the hotel's other guests:

"Hey, did you hear? Piers put out a new single!"

"What!? No waaaaaaay! I thought he was done for a while!"

"I thought so, too! But, nope! His newest one is supposed to rock! It's called... what was it... 'The Beast I've Become'? Yeah, I think that's it!"

Without even so much as saying a word, Vincent whipped out his Rotom Phone as quick as a flash and tapped on the Chatot-Tunes app. A cursory glance at the Unovan Gym Leader's music library showed that not only had he purchased quite a lot of the Galarian ex-Gym-Leader's music, but he had in fact purchased *every single album* that they had put out, even as far back as their *very first* ones.

*Piers **was** one of Vincent's biggest influences when it came to his decision of becoming a Gym Leader, after all.*

Vincent typed the title that he had heard being mentioned into the app's search bar, and sure enough, there on Vincent's phone screen was the *one* song that he didn't own yet, priced at ₱1200. "*Huh... I thought it was normally ₱600 per song. I guess maybe times're a little tough 'round here...*" Vincent tapped on the "Buy" button, and one quick digital transaction later, he was now in possession of Piers's **entire** music collection... *at least for now, perhaps.*

Having had a brief (yet nice) rest, Vincent stood back up and headed over to the elevator with his luggage in tow, and once Zach joined him inside, he pressed a button that brought the two of them up to one of the hotel's higher floors. Vincent stuffed his face against one of his lavish hotel room's large windows when he noticed the *picturesque* view that it offered from this high up. "*Whoa... it's like lookin' at a postcard! And, you see that, Zach? That's where the play's gonna be.*" Vincent pointed to an old, but also *fabulous-looking*, theatre that wasn't too relatively far from the Galarian city's own Wyndon Stadium. "*How 'bout I just unpack, and then we can do a li'l shoppin' at all those stores we passed by earlier, before it gets too late?*"

It didn't take too long for Vincent to sort out his belongings with Zach's help, and using the few remaining hours that the pair had before most of Wyndon's shops closed for the evening, they were now able to properly enjoy a night on the town as Vincent's eyes seemed to be every bit as full of stars as the darkened sky above.

*"Hey, check out these fashions! Could you imagine how much money they'd **print** if they sold that kinda stuff in Nimbasa? I'm kinda tempted to buy one o' their scarves, if I'm bein' honest-- not that the blue one I have's gettin' old, or nothin', o' course..."*

The very next morning, Zach was somewhat woken up by Vincent taking an early shower, and after getting himself dressed again (which, relatively speaking, meant that Vincent wore an outfit *completely identical* to the one he had on last night), the young Unovan man opened the Email app on his Rotom Phone, where he saw that he had received another message from an "Alfred Solaire", the director of the play that Vincent was set to star in:

Vincent,

I hope your flight over to Galar was a pleasant one! Now that you've presumably checked into your hotel room, I've asked for another limousine to be sent over today so you'll have an easier time getting to the theatre. As a matter of fact, the driver of the one you rode in last night specifically requested that they take on this job, too! I know you prefer to stay humble when possible, but I have reason to suspect you may secretly have something of an "admirer", haha! Regardless, your limousine should be outside by now-- better not keep them waiting. I'll be seeing you soon!

**Sincerely,
Alfred Solaire**

"Alrighty, Zach! Shall we be on our way, my dear Zoroark?" Vincent flourished as he held out a gloved hand for Zach to take, as though he were inviting a date out to eat at a fancy restaurant.

Zach couldn't help but blush, but at the same time, he also had a hand held up to his mouth as he stifled a chuckle. **"Y-yes, Master... How *very* polite of you..."**

Vincent and Zach boarded the elevator, and once they were back in the hotel's main lobby, they noticed a familiar-looking limousine chauffeur anxiously awaiting their arrival once again. Vincent and Zach took in more of the city's sights as the vehicle cruised down the road, eventually coming to a stop in the rear of the theatre that Vincent had pointed out to Zach just the other night. Waiting outside, near one of the theatre's back entrances, was a sharply-dressed man (whom Vincent recognized thanks to a picture they had sent him) who strode up to the limousine and outstretched their hand to shake with a wide grin as Vincent stepped out. "[Vincent Hawthorne, I presume?](#)" The man asked Vincent, who tightly gripped his hand with one of his own and shook it.

"Yep, that's me! Nice to meet you in person, Mr. Solaire! Oh, and this is Zach, my Zoroark!"

Mr. Solaire walked up to Zach and offered him his hand to shake, next. "[And, it's a pleasure to meet you too, Zach! I must say, your Illusion is downright perfect!](#)"

Zach, being a Pokémon first and foremost, had to have Vincent teach him how to shake someone's hand several years prior, and while Zach's own handshake was still somewhat *shaky* and *imperfect*, this thankfully elicited a chuckle from both Mr. Solaire and Zach. "[W-well... Thank you, Mr. Solaire. It actually does mean a great deal that a human would say that to me.](#)"

Mr. Solaire then clasped his hands together. "[Right! I'll show you to the dressing room you'll be using while you'll be here with us in Galar, and afterwards, I'll leave you to it!](#)" The Galarian play director escorted Vincent and Zach into the theatre and through a series of corridors, which ended at a door that bore a temporary plaque with Vincent's name on it. Mr. Solaire opened the door, and with a windmill-like flourish to invite Vincent inside, the Unovan actor did just that. "[Here you are! Make yourself comfortable, and I'll let you know when it's time to make some magic happen!](#)"

"[Great! Thank you so much!](#)" As Mr. Solaire walked away in order to take care of some last-minute business before the play's matinee was set to take place, Vincent briefly looked around as he surveyed the inside of his dressing room, noticing how closely it resembled the one that he had back in Unova, even down to some of the decor. "[Not bad! Solaire really *did* make this place feel like a 'home away from home'.](#)"

Vincent stood in front of the room's full-length mirror as he began trying out a number of *villainous* poses in order to figure out which one would look best for the "mad scientist" character that he was set to play. As he did so, Zach approached the dressing room's door. "Do you mind if I go for a quick walk, Master? I'm rather intrigued to see what the rest of the theatre looks like."

"Oh, sure! Go right ahead! I'm gonna be waitin' here in this room until Mr. Solaire tells me I'm needed, anyway!" Vincent replied as he continued trying out different poses, this time using one of the costumes that had been courteously stored away in a nearby locker. One such pose that he had grown fond of involved him leaning back slightly with a bent wrist, as though he were adjusting the pair of prop glasses he had just tried on.

"Thank you, Master!" Zach grinned as he gave a nod. "I won't be long, I promise."

Zach stepped out of the dressing room, and once Vincent committed a pose or two to memory and he had dressed himself back in his usual attire, a thought occurred to him:

/Y'know... I never *did* listen to that song from Piers, did I...?/

Not wanting to accidentally disturb anyone, Vincent produced a pair of wireless earbuds from one of his jacket pockets and placed them in his ears as he connected them to his Rotom Phone, which began to hover in place on its side. Once they were set up, Vincent used one index finger to scroll through his music library until he stopped at "The Beast I've Become". Feeling as eager as a Bibarel, Vincent stood up and tapped the on-screen "Play" button as his ears were immediately met by a *stunning* guitar riff that started the song off, followed shortly thereafter by a singing voice that he recognized:

♪You and I, we've grown so far a-part, but there's something I've been holding back... ♪
♪Resting deep, inside my bro-ken heart, is a monster always on attack... ♪

Vincent couldn't help but energetically dance along to the music as the song played on, and it seemed, for the moment, that the world around him simply didn't matter.

What Vincent *especially* didn't notice, however, were his ears starting to turn furry and

pointed...

As Vincent found himself *positively entranced* by the music and his ears sprouted fur, black with white at their now-triangular tips, his hair had also begun to change texture as its color shifted, until what was once dark-purple human hair was now a black-furred mohawk that began to stretch down the back of his neck. Vincent's face began to stretch into a badger-like muzzle as more black and white fur began to cover it in horizontal stripes along with tufts of white near his cheeks, and not long after, Vincent's nose turned cold and black. Within his mouth, Vincent's teeth lengthened and sharpened into sets of fangs seemingly all at once, and as his tongue began to lengthen to the point where it was starting to have trouble fitting in his snout, Vincent instinctively opened his jaws so that it was free to hang out, however *silly* it now made him look. Vincent's eyes changed color until they were almost completely a bright and *piercing* shade of red, apart from his now-vertical pupils.

Vincent's neck began to elongate itself as black and white fur emerged from his skin, forming patterns in the shapes of triangles and four-sided diamonds. "*Wow, this song is so gooo... gooo... GOON!*" Vincent said to himself as his human words seemed to warp and twist as he spoke, becoming the *brutish* voice of a particular species of Pokémon that Piers had in his possession-- *an Obstagoon!* However, Vincent had raised the volume of the song *just* high enough that he couldn't even hear his own voice changing, and as the sudden changes made their way down towards Vincent's shoulders, a pair of puffy pauldrons made of gray fur popped out of the shoulders of his dress shirt and suit jacket. As jet-black fur began to course down Vincent's arms, their muscles began to swell until they started popping the seams on Vincent's sleeves, revealing a pair of white, X-shaped fur patches on his upper arms. Just as Vincent had sprouted gray fur from his shoulders, there was now fluffy, gray fur blanketing his lower arms until it reached the tips of his wrists, and it was this fur that caused a button or two to pop off of Vincent's sleeve-cuffs after it had created enough pressure. Black fur coated Vincent's hands from within his gloves, ending just at the base of his fingers. Vincent's fingers, meanwhile, began to turn pale as his fingers themselves suddenly gained dangerous points, and what burst through the upper halves of his gloves with a pair of **SHRRRRRPPP**s (not that Vincent could hear them) were the hand-paws of an Obstagoon, complete with sharp, finger-like claws. Unable to resist the temptation, Vincent curled his middle and ring claws using his thumbs, creating a sort of "heavy metal" hand gesture with both of his paws as he began to bang his head to the music.

*/They weren't kiddin'-- this new song is **AWESOME**!!*

♪Now behold, the beast I've becoooooome...♪

♪With sharp teeth and claws, and eyes, like the suuuunnn! You'd better run!♪

The buttons on Vincent's dress shirt and jacket began to gradually pop off one-by-one as thick, gray fur began sprouting from either side of his torso, and once all of the buttons were gone, what resembled an open vest made of fur was now on display from the front, alongside a large patch of white fur on his upper chest and black on seemingly everywhere else that didn't already sport gray. Meanwhile, along Vincent's back, more fluffy gray fur continued sprouting until it was completely covered, and just like how Vincent sported X-shaped fur patches on his upper arms, there was now a third, dark gray one decorating his back, which became visible once his torso had bulked up enough to tear his shirt and jacket *not-so-cleanly* in half.

As the fur reached his waist, the "fur vest" came to a stop as black took its place, and when the black fur passed over Vincent's tailbone, it began to tingle (not that Vincent could feel it, on account of how *borderline hypnotized* he practically was by the rock music), and with a ***POP***, a short Obstagoon tail burst through the seat of Vincent's slacks.

♪ROAR!♪

♪ROAR!♪

♪ROAR!♪

♪ROAR!♪

With each "ROAR" in the song, Vincent belted out a "**GOON!**", as if to (boisterously) sing along.

*Hopefully, nobody passing by thought Vincent was acting like a **total weirdo**.*

As the last remaining parts of Vincent's body that had yet to change were his legs and feet, his growing fur very quickly corrected that, and there was now black and white

Obstagoon fur sprouting along them, with the white parts coating the inner portions of Vincent's legs and waist. Two final, fluffy cuffs of gray fur emerged from just above Vincent's ankles, which created enough pressure to pop the seams along the bottoms of his pant-legs open. Finally, Vincent's feet were quickly covered in black fur, and just like how his fingers had morphed into claws, so too were his toes undergoing something of a similar transformation, fusing into three large, bunched-together digits as they turned pale and sharp. These new claws began to forcibly press against the toe boxes of Vincent's shoes, and with hardly any effort at all, those shoes were vertically popped in half as his new foot-paws were now hanging out of the resulting gap. In what *almost* seemed like a moment of cognizance during his state of entrancement, Vincent shook the shoes and socks off of his paws as he continued *fervently rocking out* to the music. As he continued his dancing and head-banging, Vincent swiped one of his finger-like claws against the touch screen of his phone, causing the "Loop" feature to be switched on.

Several more minutes later, the door to Vincent's dressing room opened once again. "**Alright, Master! I've-- *what...!?***" As Zach stepped through the door, his face bore a look of shock as his eyes beheld what looked like, if he hadn't completely and utterly lost his mind, an Obstagoon wearing his Trainer's clothes, *ripped and torn as they were*. Zach strode up to Vincent's Rotom Phone and, noticing that he was listening to Piers' latest song, judging by the title displayed on the screen, tapped the "Pause" button. This action seemed to snap Vincent out of his music-induced trance, and what followed was something of a brief moment of comedic hilarity:

"Goon, Goon!? Obsta--"
(*"Hey, what's the big idea, Zach!? I was--"*)

Vincent, now hearing the growls that replaced his voice, clapped his paws to his mouth, and upon realizing that he had Obstagoon paws in place of human hands, held them out in front of his own face before glancing down at the paws that had replaced his feet and the tail that poked out of a small hole in his slacks.

"Obsta... goon...?"
(*"Wait... what the heck's goin' on...?"*)

Vincent turned back around to face his Rotom Phone, and now that he had a moment to do so, he leaned in slightly closer as he took another look at the song's thumbnail.

Vincent hadn't thought much of it at the time, but said thumbnail featured a shadowy image of Piers, who had had been partially transformed himself (through the use of editing software, unlike Vincent) into the imposing, badger-like Pokémon that Vincent now was.

The human-turned-Obstagoon lightly stomped over to the room's full-length mirror, and when he was able to have a more thorough look at himself, he remarked:

"Obsta... Obstagoon...?"
("I mean... they say good music can 'change your life', right...?")

"Well, then... that certainly explains the *inflated* price..." Zach said to Vincent, placing a hand to his forehead. "I can only assume this is temporary, else--"

"Oh, Vincent...? It's nearly **showtime!**"

A chill shot down the actor's spine as he heard a familiar voice call out to him from the other side of the door.

"GOON...!"
("Oh, crud...!")

Zach, thinking quickly, gave a firm, determined nod as he came up with an idea. "I'll do what I can to buy time, and meanwhile... *let us both hope that this conundrum resolves itself 'gooner' rather than later, I suppose.*"

As Zach stepped through the dressing room's door in order to enact his plan, Vincent did what he could to hide himself from view, so that Mr. Solaire hopefully wouldn't see him once Zach had even so much as slightly cracked the door open. "Vincent will be just a short while longer, Mr. Solaire-- he's still trying to figure a few more things out, and he'll be right with you."

Vincent brushed the back of one paw against his forehead like he was wiping sweat away, and feeling marginally relieved, he slid down the wall he had pressed himself up against until his rear softly thudded against the floor.

*/Well, at the very least.../ Vincent thought to himself. /I know what's gonna be a **huge** hit at that 'block party' that's supposed to take place when I get back to Nimbasa.../*